

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 COME-00 EB-07 DHA-02 IO-13

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R 101715Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8943

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

AMCONGEN MILAN

AMCONGEN NAPLES

US DOCOSOUTH

AMEMBASSY BONN

SHAPEUSNR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11622

US DOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: THE SOCIALISTS UNDER CRAXI

REF: ROME 11542

1. BETTINO CRAXI'S ELECTION AS SECRETARY HAS POSED ANEW
THE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION WHETHER ANY CHANGE IN POLICY
CAN BE EXPECTED OF THE SOCIALISTS. THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS
A FIRST TENTATIVE REPLY TO THE QUESTION.

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2. THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION ABOUT CRAXI THE MAN AND HIS

TENDENCIES. THOUGH ONLY 42 HE IS A WELL-PREPARED, SKILLFUL POLITICIAN, IMAGINATIVE AND COURAGEOUS, HAS A BROAD EUROPEAN OUTLOOK, A DEEP COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF WESTERN DEMOCRACY, AND NO PERSONAL ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE PCI'S DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS OR ITS TIES WITH THE USSR. SINCE HIS ELECTION HE HAS STATED THAT HE BELONGS TO A GENERATIONS WHOSE OUTLOOK WAS DETERMINED BY THE EVENTS OF BUDAPEST (IN CONTRAST TO HIS YOUNGER COLLEAGUES WHOSE OUTLOOK WAS FORMED BY VIETNAM).

3. BUT, THE NATURE OF ITALIAN POLITICS AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY ARE SUCH, THAT EVEN IF THE LEADER MAY BE SOLID IT DOES NOT MEAN ONE CAN BE SURE OF THE PARTY. THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES TEND TO EXCLUDE ANY IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN THE POLICIES WHICH HAVE CONSISTENTLY MOVED THE PSI AWAY FROM COLLABORATION WITH THE DC AND TOWARD THE PCI SINCE 1974:

(A) CRAXI EMERGED AS LEADER, NOT BECAUSE OF A DISPUTE OVER POLICY, BUT AS THE BEST PREPARED AND LEAST CONTROVERSIAL OF THE SO-CALLED FORTY-YEAR OLDS TO ASSUME THE POSITION. HIS ELECTION IS PRIMARILY AN EXPRESSION OF THEIR GENERATIONAL VICTORY OVER THE OLD GUARD. MANY OF THOSE WHO MADE HIS ELECTION POSSIBLE DO NOT SHARE HIS IDEOLOGICAL OUTLOOK.

(B) SOCIALIST OFFICIAL POLICY AS DEFINED BY ITS CONGRESS AND ELECTORAL PLATFORM WAS REAFFIRMED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AND CRAXI IS TIED TO IT. SPECULATIONS THAT CRAXI'S ELECTION AND THE PARTY'S INTERNAL RENEWAL AUGURED A CHANGE IN POLICY HAS FORCED CRAXI HIMSELF TO REAFFIRM THAT THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE IN STRATEGY, AND NO MOVEMENT TOWARD THE RIGHT WITHIN THE PARTY. HE HAS ALSO STATED THAT THE PARTY IS UNANIMOUS IN ITS STRATEGY; DIFFERENCES ONLY CONCERNED ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

(C) THE NEW DIRECTORATE, THOUGH SUBSTANTIALLY A RE-EXPRESSION OF THE BALANCE AMONG THE "EX-FACTIONS", REFLECTS THE INCREASED WEIGHT OF THE LEFT. MOREOVER, ABSENT FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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IT ARE SUCH OLD GUARD MODERATES AS MARIOTTI. SOME OF THE EX-DEMARTINO FOLLOWERS, ESPECIALLY ITS PRESUMPTIVE YOUNG LEADER, ENRICE MANCA, CLEARLY FAVOR CLOSER COLLABORATION WITH THE PCI. (ALL DEMARTINO LOYALISTS WERE EXCLUDED.)

(D) A MAJORITY OF THE PARTY'S YOUNG RANK AND FILE WHOSE FERMENT CONTRIBUTED TO THE VICTORY OF THE FORTY-

YEAR OLDS IMPATIENTLY FAVOR COMMITTING THE PARTY TO WORK ACTIVELY FOR A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT. AS ON YOUNG BUT MODERATE SOCIALIST LEADER TOLD EMBOFF BEFORE THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING, ANY ATTEMPT TO TAKE THE PARTY BACK TO OLD CENTER-LEFT POSITIONS WOULD SPARK OPEN REVOLT IN THE PROVINCES.(E) THE PCI'S ABLE MANIPULATION OF THE PSI, PRINCIPALLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

4. CRAXI THEREFORE HAS LITTLE ROOM FOR MANEUVER IN THE SHORT TERM, MAKING IT HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT THERE WILL BE ANY CHANGE IN SOCIALIST POLICY IN THE SHORT TERM. (CRAXI'S FIRST ACT AS SECRETARY WAS TO EXCLUDE PSI PARTICIPATION IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT AND CONFIRM SOCIALIST POSITIONS.) THE MOST ONE CAN REALISTICALLY HOPE FOR IS INCREASED FLEXIBILITY, FOR WHICH A FUNDAMENTAL SOCIALIST ASPIRATION, "AUTONOMY" OF BOTH THE PCI AND DC PROVIDES SOME OPENING. CRAXI IS A PREEMINENT SPOLISMAN FOR AUTONOMY AND SINCE HIS ELECTION HAS CALLED IT THE AIR THE PSI MUST BREATHE TO SURVIVE, IMPLICITLY CRITICIZING FATALISTS IN THE PARTY RESIGNED TO UNIFICATIONS WITH THE PCI IN THE NAME OF WORKING CLASS UNITY. HE SUPPORTS "EX-FACTIONS LEADER MANCINI'S CRITICISM OF THE LEFT WING'S IMPOSITION ON PARTY POLICY WHICH, BY RULING OUT PSI SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENTS FORMED WITHOUT THE PCI'S INCLUSION, AT LEAST IN ITS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, MAKES PSI ACTIONS HOSTAGE TO THE DECISIONS OF THE PCI. EX-DEMARTINO FOLLOWER PRINCIPE AND OTHER HAVE TAKEN UP THIS THEME.

5. NEVERTHELESS, HOW FLEXIBLE CRAXI COULD BE IN THE SHORT RUN IS DUBIOUS. THE GOAL OF A UNITED LEFT HAS BECOME FOR ITALIAN SOCIALISTS A FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE, NOT JUST IN ITALY, BUT IN WESTERN EUROPE. EVEN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MACINI GROUP PAYS LIP SERVICE TO THIS OBJECTIVE AND SUPPORTS ACTIONS IN LINE WITH IT. (IN THE SHORT RUN, PERHAPS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE ARGUMENT CRA HAS TO IMPOSE A (DULY CAMOUFLAGED) RECEPTIVENESS TO A COMPROMISE WITH THE DC WHICH LEAVES THE PCI UNHAPPY IS THE WELL-FOUNDED FEAR OF ELECTORAL DISASTER IF PSI INTRANSIGENCE MAKES NEW ELECTIONS NECESSARY.)

6. HOWEVER, IN THE LONG RUN, THERE IS A BASIS FOR HOPE THAT CRAXI WILL SUCCEED IN TAKING THE PARTY DOWN AN AUTONOMOUS ROAD. HE IS EMINENTLY QUALIFIED TO DO SO. BUT BEFORE HE CAN, HE MUST BECOME SECRETARY IN HIS OWN RIGHT THROUGH ABLE ADMINISTRATION AND REFORM OF THE PARTY, ACQUIRING A NATIONAL FOLLOWING WHICH WILL GIVE HIM THE POWER TO IMPOSE HIS VIEW.

THIS WILL TAKE TIME, IF IT CAN BE DONE AT ALL. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, POLITICAL PARTIES, COMMUNISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME11622
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760277-1107
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760771/aaaackbx.tel
Line Count: 170
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ROME 11542
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SOCIALISTS UNDER CRAXI
TAGS: PINT, IT, (CRAXI, BETTINO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006